CHAPTER 10
SECTION 4
INDIA’S MUSLIM EMPIRES

After 550, rival princes fought for control of India. Around 1000, Muslim armies moved in. Muslim attacks included onslaughts that killed many Hindus and destroyed Buddhist temples. Muslims triumphed due to military superiority, rivalries among Hindu princes, and the many Hindus who converted to Islam. By the 1100s, a sultan controlled northern India. From the capital in Delhi, the Delhi sultanate ruled from 1206 to 1526.

Muslim rulers reorganized Indian government and increased trade. During the Mongol raids of the 1200s, scholars fled from Baghdad to India, bringing Persian and Greek learning with them. These newcomers helped turn Delhi into a place where art and architecture flourished. However, in 1389, Mongols attacked Delhi, destroying much of its culture.

The Muslim advance brought two very different religious groups—Hindus and Muslims—face to face. Muslims worshiped a single god, while Hindus prayed to many. Hindus accepted the caste system, while Islam promoted equality.

Gradually, the cultures blended. Hindus were allowed to practice their religion and some rajahs, or local Hindu rulers, continued governing. Many Hindus converted to Islam because it rejected the caste system. Muslims followed some Hindu customs and ideas. A new language, called Urdu, blended Arabic, Persian, and the Indian language spoken in Delhi. A new religion, Sikhism, was a blend of Muslim and Hindu beliefs.

In 1526, Babur led Turkish and Mongol armies into northern India to establish the Mughal dynasty, which would last until 1857. Babur’s grandson, Akbar, known as Akbar the Great, ruled from 1556 to 1605. He established a strong central government that had paid officials; he also modernized the army and encouraged international trade. He allowed Hindus to work in government and promoted peace through religious tolerance.

After Akbar’s death, his son’s wife, Nur Jahan, managed the government skillfully. She was the most powerful woman in Indian history until the twentieth century. Akbar’s grandson, Shah Jahan, ruled when Mughal literature, art, and architecture were at their height. He built the Taj Mahal, a tomb for his wife. It is a spectacular building and a great monument of the Mughal empire.

Review Questions
1. What are two differences between Hindu and Muslim beliefs?

2. What were Nur Jahan’s contributions to the Mughal empire?